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New York

President:	Mr. Ben Yahia	(Tunisia)
Members:	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Mali	Mr. Ouane
	Mauritius	Mr. Neewoor
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Granovsky
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Ukraine	Mr. Kuchynski
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock
	United States of America	Mr. Cunningham

Agenda

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Briefing by His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic.

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01-24135 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Great Lakes region

Briefing by His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I request the Chief of Protocol to escort His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Security Council will now being its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting the Security Council will hear a briefing by His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic. On behalf of the members of the Council I welcome Mr. Kagame and convey to him our appreciation for his having accepted the Council's invitation to engage in an exchange of views on the situation in the Great Lakes region, an issue to which the Council attaches great importance.

I wish also to welcome His Excellency Secretary-General Kofi Annan and to express our appreciation for his having accepted our invitation to attend today's meeting.

In view of time constraints, I would ask representatives to limit their interventions to questions or comments.

I call on the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: I have had the chance this morning to meet with President Kagame, and we have had a very good discussion. For the second time in less than one week, we are meeting again here in the Council to reaffirm our commitment to bringing peace and stability to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

I believe the welcome presence of the President of Rwanda here today should strengthen our resolve to make the most of this opportunity for change and ensure that it gives us new impetus towards a final resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. What is clear to this Council, and should be clear to all sides in the conflict, is that no country in the area can hope to enjoy stability while the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues and that all will benefit from its resolution. I therefore wish to commend President Kagame and President Kabila for the statesmanship they showed in meeting last week in Washington to discuss the challenges facing both countries and the entire area.

There are difficult issues of governance, national dialogue, democracy, accountability and reconciliation that need to be addressed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the region as a whole if there is to be a lasting solution in the Great Lakes. There is also the issue of the continued existence of predatory armed groups. Although there is no easy military solution to this dangerous phenomenon, those guilty of the worst atrocities of human rights abuses — and especially those guilty of genocide — must not be allowed to escape unpunished. We must understand that all the countries in the region, in particular Rwanda, have legitimate security concerns.

Let me also commend the Government and the people of Rwanda for their efforts to build and renew their nation. Much remains to be done, however. The United Nations will continue to give whatever help it can to Rwanda in carrying out these tasks.

In welcoming President Joseph Kabila during his brief visit last week, many members of the Security Council spoke of the need to seize this opportunity for the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In addition, leaders throughout the region have responded to the latest developments in a way that suggests that they sincerely wish to implement the Lusaka Agreement in all its aspects. I hope we can build on this momentum and on the fact that no major ceasefire violations have been reported over the past two weeks.

I would like to mention one step that will serve as an important confidence-building measure as the United Nations moves to help the parties carry out the disengagement plan signed in Harare in December. The Force Commander of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), Major-General Diallo, is currently discussing with the authorities in Kigali and in the

Democratic Republic of the Congo the withdrawal of Rwandan forces and their allies from the town of Pweto, on Lake Mweru in Katanga. We understand that substantial, if not complete, agreement has been reached. MONUC is ready to deploy a team of observers to the town once all the arrangements are in place. A withdrawal from Pweto by Rwanda and its allies in accordance with the Harare disengagement plan would help set the tone for the remainder of the disengagement plan. It would also represent an important step towards compliance with Security Council resolution 1304 (2000) of 16 June 2000, which calls for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the report I intend to submit to the Council next week, I will propose a revised concept of operations for the deployment by MONUC. I will propose the deployment of additional personnel to monitor and verify the implementation by the parties of the Harare disengagement plan. Meanwhile, MONUC has already begun to take some initial steps which fall within the mandate approved by the Security Council in February 2000. Should the Council approve the revised concept, MONUC will be able to help the parties further in drawing back their forces from the confrontation line. This will reduce the risk of clashes and serve as a vital first step towards an eventual complete withdrawal of all foreign forces from the country.

We may also be on the verge of a new and more constructive stage in the process of bringing an end to the conflict and instability in the region. We should, however, not lose sight of the scale of challenges that remain. Indeed, it is my profound hope that the resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will bring peace to the entire Great Lakes region and, in particular, to Rwanda. We are also taking urgent steps to re-energize the intra-Congolese dialogue and I hope the summit that is being planned in the region will focus on this aspect of the problem. I think a new opportunity has presented itself and I urge this Council and every country in the region to do everything possible to seize it.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic.

President Kagame: I thank the Secretary-General for his introduction and I thank you, Mr. President, for your invitation to me to address this Council.

I want to start by informing the Council that Rwanda has been trying to rebuild itself from the devastation caused by the genocide and other problems before that. Progress has been made in the area of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the country, in matters of reconciliation, in dealing with the questions of justice and in the bigger problem of socio-economic development.

However, this progress and the efforts behind it are being hampered by the general context in which this is happening — the context being what is happening in the region. This relates to the situation in the Congo, which I am sure many members of the Council have been following very closely. Without peace in the Congo and the countries of the region, development and this kind of progress definitely will not take place.

However, there have been efforts before, and these efforts have continued in order to try to address these matters that would contribute to peace and stability in the region. That is why we later on reached the peace agreement in Lusaka, though at later stages it became difficult to have it implemented. So, it is true — I agree, as has been said, that there is a need to take advantage of the change that has taken place in the Congo, however tragic that was in its coming. I discussed with the new President, President Kabila, many issues relating to what we can all do in the region to bring about this peace. That mainly focused on the implementation of the Lusaka peace process. My country has the desire to fulfil its obligations as demanded by the Lusaka peace process, or even beyond that.

There are really three core issues that must be addressed, in my view, in order to have the Lusaka process succeed. These are the issues on which the process was built. One is the inter-Congolese dialogue, which is talked about in the peace agreement. Hopefully this inter-Congolese dialogue will lead to a stable situation internally in the Congo so that problems will stop originating from the Congo and affecting the neighbouring countries.

The second core issue is how the problem of former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe are addressed in this whole situation. This problem has been going on from May 1994 until this

moment. It has been discussed in different forums, and we have always, unfortunately, fallen short of some practical ways of eradicating that problem. So, that is the second core issue. I think that the Lusaka peace process is built on it, and it needs to be taken forward.

The third core issue is the withdrawal of foreign armies from the Congo. All three of these issues are addressed in the formula we have in the Lusaka peace process. If we go back to that and see what we can do to move the peace forward, then we most likely have a chance — with the change that has taken place in the Congo and with the statements that the new President has made about wanting to realize peace — not only in the Congo but also in the region. That is the impression I got from him when I was speaking with him.

However, the two of us, and maybe a few others, having discussed this issue is not enough. I think that everybody needs to come to our assistance — the assistance of the Congo, of Rwanda, of the region — in order to support this process so that it can be implemented. I have no doubt that the Council will continue to play its role in finding a solution, or solutions, to many of these problems that I have mentioned. I continue to call upon the Council to be helpful not only in bringing about peace but also in supporting the region in terms of socio-economic development.

With these few remarks, I look forward to the support of the Council, and I will be very ready to continue our discussion in case there are any questions. I will make whatever clarifications that might be required on these issues.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank the President of the Rwandese Republic for his statement.

I shall now give the floor to members of the Council to comment on the intervention by President Kagame.

Mr. Cunningham (United States of America): It is a pleasure to see you here, Mr. President. Your presence testifies to the importance of our discussion today.

We are pleased to welcome President Kagame back to the Council and have listened carefully to his remarks. When the Security Council met with President Kabila five days ago, I said that the Democratic Republic of the Congo has the right under the United Nations Charter to insist on the withdrawal of all foreign forces from its territory. I also said that the Government of Rwanda has a right under the United Nations Charter to insist that Congolese territory not be used as a launching pad for attacks against Rwanda.

There are obvious mutual interests here that should form the basis for a discussion. We hope that President Kagame and his colleagues in the region can begin to work together, instead of against each other, to forge a common security regime. We do not believe that Rwanda can secure its long-term security interests via a policy of military opposition to the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Likewise, we do not believe that the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be accomplished through military means.

We believe that we are at the crossroads in the peace process. The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and multiple Security Council resolutions constitute the expectations of the region and the international community. Now is the time to translate words into action. Now is the time for concrete steps.

It is important that all parties cooperate in creating and sustaining the conditions necessary for the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC), something that we all want to see happen quickly and safely. It is also critical that the ceasefire hold, that no forward military movement occur and that the disengagement of forces begin. We welcome Rwanda's readiness to withdraw from Pweto and urge that this offer be supported and immediately implemented. In addition to the priority of disengagement, we agree with the Secretary-General that Pweto represents a critical confidence-building measure and a barometer of political will.

As we emphasized to President Kabila last week, all the Governments in the region have a common interest in neutralizing armed, non-State actors. We believe that lasting security for both Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo can come about only when their Governments build a cooperative relationship based on common interests, one that leads to the marginalization of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, Interahamwe and all other armed groups. In the case of the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, those under indictment by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda should be brought to justice, and the rest need to be offered a credible and voluntary process of

disarmament, demobilization and reintegration or resettlement.

We must be frank with President Kagame. The human rights situation in areas under Rwandan occupation or the control of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) is deeply troubling. Information from the United States Government, the United Nations, other Member States, Congolese civil society groups and international non-governmental organizations paints an alarming picture. Rwanda's claims to the right of self-defence are badly undercut when so many Congolese civilians are victimized. We urge President Kagame to ensure that his forces and their Congolese allies respect fully the human and civil rights of the Congolese people.

During his recent visit, President Kabila reaffirmed his support for the Lusaka process. We are hopeful that these positive statements will create new openings for a peace so that all sides can address the common security interests that can and should form the basis of lasting peace in the region.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): It is an honour and a great pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over the Security Council meeting today.

We are glad for the opportunity to hear President Kagame today, and we welcome the good proposals he has shared with us to settle the conflict. We have also noted with great interest the meeting a few days ago between President Kagame and President Kabila. That dialogue, if it continues, as we ardently hope it will, will bring us closer to a settlement of the conflict. These are encouraging signs at a time when, as the Secretary-General said last week and again today, a certain calm has returned to the conflict zones of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Today there is undoubtedly an opportunity to be seized to relaunch the Lusaka Agreement process. But how long will this last?

Relaunching the Lusaka Agreement process and then finally proceeding to phase II of the deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) requires the disengagement and withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo without further delay, pursuant to the accords signed by the parties to the conflict and to the relevant Security Council resolutions. I wish to recall that these resolutions, particularly Security Council 1304 (2000), state that that withdrawal should be progressive and phased and should begin with the withdrawal of troops of the uninvited States in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The States to which these resolutions apply cannot subject their implementation to conditions.

The Security Council has already had the opportunity to emphasize that the presence of forces of aggression in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is unacceptable. It is the Council's duty to recall everywhere and at all times the fundamental principles of the Charter: respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We have noted the willingness expressed by the Rwandese authorities to withdraw their forces from Pweto once the MONUC observers arrive. The latter must be deployed quickly, and we will follow closely how Rwanda lives up to its commitment. That will be a first step in the right direction.

I would also like to recall the concerns expressed by the Council about massive violations of human rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in the eastern part of the country. There is also concern about information on large-scale plundering of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, particularly in Kivu. In this connection, we all await with great interest the conclusions and recommendations of the panel of experts created by the Security Council, which must submit its report at the end of March.

The return to stability in the region therefore requires first of all the implementation of the withdrawal of foreign forces. However, the internal aspect of the Lusaka Agreement is also necessary. In this connection, we welcome the encouraging commitments made by President Kabila, whose implementation we will follow with interest. It should be noted, nonetheless, that establishing an internal dialogue involving all political actors must not be confined to the Democratic Republic of the Congo alone. This is one of the keys to the settlement of the crisis for the region as a whole.

President Kagame rightly emphasizes his concerns about security. His concerns are legitimate, and the Security Council is aware of Rwanda's need to enjoy peace and stability within its borders that would not be jeopardized by foreign threats. We have all noted the efforts of the Rwandese authorities to settle the matter of the former Rwandan Armed Forces

(FAR), and we are pleased to note that many of them have already been reintegrated into the Rwandan Patriotic Army. We must continue in that direction. The matter of the ex-FAR and the Interahamwe militias will also undoubtedly have to be resolved, in part, between the Kinshasa and Kigali authorities. But assistance from the international community will also be needed. In this spirit, the Security Council has made it known that it is ready to envisage the deployment of MONUC personnel to Goma or Bukavu along the border with Rwanda.

The coming weeks must enable long-overdue progress to be made in settling this conflict. The meeting between the Security Council and the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement in two weeks, and the meetings and summits preceding it, should, if all the parties to the conflict make the necessary efforts, lead to an irreversible process of disengagement and withdrawal that will bring us closer to a resolution of this crisis. On this point, I would like to assure President Kagame of France's resolve to work for such a settlement, which must take into account the interests and legitimate concerns of all the parties involved.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): My delegation is honoured to see you, the Foreign Minister of Tunisia, presiding over today's meeting, and we wish to thank you and your delegation for the tremendous interest you have displayed in the issues before the Council this month.

The Jamaican delegation is please to join you, Mr. President, in welcoming President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, with whom the Security Council met last January. We appreciate his initiative to meet again with the Council and thank him for his important statement giving us his perspective on developments in the region. We note his express commitment to moving the peace process forward and the attention that he drew to the three core issues: the inter-Congolese dialogue, the need to address issues relating to the former Rwandan Armed Forces (FAR) and Interahamwe and the withdrawal of foreign forces from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Last week the Council was addressed by President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we were assured of his commitment to relaunching the peace process. We view as a positive step and as a confidence-building measure the meeting held between President Kagame and President Kabila in Washington last week.

My delegation's appeal is for the leaders in the region to seek reconciliation and aim at bringing about a peaceful solution to the crisis, which is affecting all the countries in the Great Lakes region. For my delegation, the Lusaka Agreement remains the most viable option for peace and must be adhered to by all parties, since in our view there can be no military solution to the conflict.

We note President Kagame's appeal to the international community to seize the moment. My delegation hopes that all the signatories to the Lusaka Agreement will reaffirm their commitment to the process by abiding by the ceasefire and withdrawing troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000), in conformity with the stipulated time frame of the Ceasefire Agreement and the Kampala disengagement plan of April 2000 and with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We agree that all Congolese must be fully engaged in the inter-Congolese dialogue, which is an important component of the Lusaka Agreement.

This should also be an opportune time for the parties to recommit to the subsidiary plan for disengagement of the Harare agreement signed in December last year. As the Secretary-General indicated, the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) has already begun to take measures to support the disengagement, and the Secretary-General has informed us that he will be presenting to the Council later this month a revised concept of operations for the further deployment of MONUC as a basis for further action.

Peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo cannot be allowed to fail, as the cost of such a failure would be too high a price to pay for the region as a whole. The conflict is exacting a terrible toll on the civilian population not only of the Democratic Republic of the Congo but of the entire region. We again emphasize the need for this issue to be addressed within the framework of a comprehensive peace involving the entire Great Lakes region. My delegation therefore welcomes the regional initiatives taken so far, and we look forward to the regional summit involving

all the parties to the Lusaka Agreement, to be held later this month. We expect the meeting between the Security Council and the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement, also scheduled to take place this month, to benefit from the outcome and recommendations of the summit.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to emphasize that sustainable peace can be achieved only when all parties concerned rise above the differences which separate them and focus instead on the issues which unite them, and lay the groundwork for addressing the economic and social challenges facing the countries concerned.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): At the outset, Bangladesh would like to express its great pleasure at seeing you, Sir, preside over our deliberations. Your presence attests to the importance of today's meeting.

It is a special privilege for the Council to have His Excellency President Paul Kagame with us this morning. We are grateful to him for making the time to come here, despite his pressing schedule. Coming as it does a few days after our meeting with President Joseph Kabila, our interaction this morning with President Kagame offers an important opportunity to put the peace process in Central Africa back on track. We noted the three areas that he highlighted in this context. The statement by the Secretary-General outlined the areas where action needs to be focused.

The Great Lakes region has been at the centre of the Council's preoccupations for some time. We have seen various efforts being made at the United Nations and in the region to find a peaceful solution to the conflict. It is unfortunate that the immense suffering of millions and the colossal loss of resources have not brought about a significant change so far. Agreements are signed, certainly with the best intentions; but when it comes to implementation, there is little progress.

In our meeting with President Kabila last week, we noted his determination to make fresh efforts to bring peace to the country, to hold free and fair elections and to extend full cooperation to the United Nations. We spoke of a new departure. We are happy to note that the urge to look towards the future is shared among the leadership in the region.

We understand that efforts are being made for a regional meeting, possibly at the summit level, involving all signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The Council should be supportive of such initiatives. It will be important to see substantive progress on the ground prior to our meeting with the Political Committee here later this month.

We welcome President Kagame's assertion that an opportunity exists and that it must be seized now. The Lusaka Agreement provides for a workable compromise for all parties and the subsequent plans detail concrete steps. In pursuing these agreements, the parties must take a realistic approach. The resolution of the most complex and the most intractable conflict of recent times will naturally require the most courageous decisions on the part of the leadership of the region. It will require hard concessions, difficult compromises and, above all, a lot of pragmatism.

The security concerns of the neighbours of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and related issues, will need careful consideration. The imperative of justice should be pursued with the ultimate goal of healing past wounds and promoting reconciliation between societies.

Peace has its costs, but the cost of war is certainly much higher. Given its immense natural and great human resources, the Great Lakes region can become an important positive force. The transition from senseless confrontation to regional cooperation is what the peoples of the region require. Their leaders can bring that about.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mali is delighted to see the Council meeting under your authority, Mr. Minister, to consider the situation in the Great Lakes region. I should like to welcome the presence today of His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, and of the Secretary-General and to thank them for their important statements.

We listened carefully to President Kagame and to the Secretary-General, who, like President Kabila a few days ago, enabled us to glimpse some encouraging prospects for the resolution of the conflict in the Great Lakes region. The position of Mali on this issue is well known, and I would not like to repeat it here today. I shall therefore confine myself to making a few brief remarks, in deference to your wishes, Mr. President.

First of all, I should like to underline the fact that Mali welcomes the new impetus for peace and offers its firm support for it. We believe that a lasting

settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo necessarily entails respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

Secondly, we believe that the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the Arusha peace agreement remain the viable bases for lasting peace in the Great Lakes region. In that connection, we call on all parties to show restraint and to cooperate fully in the implementation of those agreements and of the relevant Security Council resolutions. The time has come to put an end to a conflict that has persisted for too long and that has brought indescribable suffering to innocent people.

Thirdly, I want to stress that we strongly encourage the continuation of the talks between President Kagame and President Joseph Kabila, which began last week at Washington, just as we support regional initiatives and the efforts of the Organization of African Unity and of the international community to put a final stop to the conflict in the Great Lakes region.

I wish in conclusion to say that my delegation expects to make a useful contribution to the Security Council's meeting with the members of the Political Committee of the Lusaka Agreement, to take place on 21 and 22 February, with a view to advancing the peace process.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): We welcome President Kagame to the Council today. Rwanda has suffered the pain of civil war and genocide. In Ireland, we understand the consequences of intercommunal violence and the difficulties of building trust and understanding between communities which have been engaged in deep and sustained violence.

The Rwandan people and their Government have our full support and understanding in their struggle to build a free, secure, democratic and human-rights-based society founded on equality and on respect for diversity. We would be very interested in hearing any comments from President Kagame on progress towards intercommunal reconciliation within Rwanda.

Rwanda and the region will be unable to recover from their wounds while war continues in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; earlier, President Kagame rightly stressed that fact. Ireland subscribes fully to the stated position of the European Union, which is that lasting peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo can be achieved only through a negotiated peace settlement that is fair to all parties, through respect for the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and for democratic principles and human rights in all States in the region, and through taking account of the security interests of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of neighbouring countries.

We welcome the reassurance by President Kagame that Rwanda is ready to implement the Lusaka Agreement and to assist in bringing about an early and peaceful resolution of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. President Kagame has highlighted to us the three main challenges which he sees in this process. We recognize the security concerns which led to the presence of Rwandan troops on the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and we agree that any lasting settlement will have to take account of the armed groups in the region, including members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe. However, we are not convinced that these concerns justify the extent of the current Rwandan military presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The same reservation applies to the number and disposition of troops deployed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by other neighbouring countries, regardless of the reasons put forward for their presence.

We join the Secretary-General in our interest in hearing from President Kagame about the timetable he would envisage for implementing the Harare disengagement plan, in particular when we can expect Rwandan troops to withdraw from Pueto, as we understand this to be under discussion between his Government and the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). Ireland looks forward with anticipation to the report that the Secretary-General is now preparing, which will contain a revised concept of operations for MONUC.

At the same time, we are concerned about any illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the Democratic Republic of the Congo by the various parties to the conflict. It is seriously damaging the international standing of those who are allegedly involved. We encourage all parties to give the United Nations panel of experts established to investigate this situation all the information it requires. We hope that

Rwanda will build on the readiness, which is already shown, to cooperate with the panel in its work.

The events of the past few days have given rise to a rare stirring of hope for the Congo and for the region as a whole. We still await the longed-for wind of change, but there is at least a sense of movement in the air. The visits to the United Nations of President Kagame and of President Joseph Kabila, and their meeting in Washington, have shown that the dynamic for peace can come from within the region itself. The Secretary-General earlier complimented the statesmanship which enabled that meeting to take place, and we agree with that.

Ireland urges President Kagame to continue his contacts with all the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We look forward to further progress in advance of the forthcoming New York meeting with the members of the Lusaka Political Committee.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): Thank you, Mr. President, for leading us today. Your presence here, I think, testifies to the importance of this meeting.

It is extremely good to have President Kagame with us. I think that, from the comments he has heard so far from around the Council table, he will have a very clear sense of where the Council is coming from. I do not want to make any real comments; I would like to put some questions to President Kagame, subscribing in particular to what the representative of Ireland has just said as a foundation for what I am going to say, coming as we both do, along with France, from the European Union's position on this issue.

In the past few days, since President Kagame's meeting with President Joseph Kabila in Washington, we have had further discussions with the Congolese President and with his authorities. It is becoming clear to us that the new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo accepts the principle of combined security for the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for Rwanda and for Uganda, in particular – there are other States involved as well. They have indicated to us specifically that if the talks that are now beginning and that must continue – because dialogue is essential here – focus as a prime objective on the combined security of the Great Lakes countries, then they can see some progress being made. They will respect Rwanda's legitimate interests if Rwanda respects theirs. I would very much like President Kagame's confirmation that he accepts that as a basic principle of what we are going to try to do over the next few weeks, because certain things follow from that, and, of course, follow from what has already been written in terms of Council resolutions, the Lusaka accords and the disengagement agreements to which Rwanda is party.

As a sub-question, President Kagame mentioned as one of his three core issues the need to settle the issue of the members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe; could he indicate to us how many fighters bearing arms we are talking about? Some perhaps could be reabsorbed into the Rwanda Patriotic Army (RPA) or into Rwanda's structures; some will not be. How many are we talking about, that President Kagame is concerned about?

Secondly, does President Kagame accept the Secretary-General's proposal of a first confidence-building measure: withdrawal from Pueto by President Kagame's forces, in combination with the deployment, by arrangement, of observers from the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC)? I think that if President Kagame could take the first step in implementing the disengagement agreements we would begin to get somewhere. It would be extremely important and would put pressure on other parties to make balanced disengagements which get the thing going. And that, after all, is what we need in terms of the steps that have to be taken over the next few weeks.

Thirdly, will President Kagame go to the Lusaka meeting, which, I understand, has been arranged for 12 February, of heads of State of the region? We believe that his presence there to continue these discussions is exceptionally important. And there, or elsewhere, will he meet President Joseph Kabila again soon? President Kabila has indicated to us that he wishes to continue his bilateral communication with President Kagame, and we would like President Kagame's reciprocal agreement in principle to that.

The next question is: Has President Kagame given instructions to his armed forces to respect Congolese property and to refrain from any exploitation of the mineral wealth of the Congo? That is a top requirement of the Security Council and we will be pursuing that. I hope that that is taken very seriously by his Government.

Finally, will President Kagame take action, within the scope of his responsibility in practice in that region, for the protection of human rights and to ensure that child soldiers are not recruited into any military activity in the area of the Rwandan Patriotic Army's operations?

I think all these questions are very important for our discussions and I hope that we can make progress over the next few weeks leading up to the meeting on 21 and 22 February with the Political Committee in this Council.

Mr. Mahbubani (Singapore): First, we would like to warmly welcome you, Mr. President, as you preside over our meeting this morning. We would also like to join our colleagues in welcoming warmly President Kagame to this meeting.

Since you, Sir, have urged us to be brief in the interests of time, I will just mention three points this morning.

The first point that is clear, especially after meeting President Kabila and now having met President Kagame, is that we have a unique window of opportunity to relaunch the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. It is clear, judging from the atmosphere in this Chamber this morning and when we met President Kabila, that there is a certain expectation that we should take full advantage of this window of opportunity. In the nature of these things, however, this window of opportunity can close very fast, so we hope that if, as a result of this meeting, there is some forward momentum, we will have made a useful contribution. We would therefore urge all the parties concerned to make a serious and concerted effort to meet the increased expectations that have been generated by these two meetings.

The second point I wish to make is that we are pleased that plans are under way to consider the deployment of phase II of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). We believe that MONUC can be a key catalyst in changing things on the ground in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but for its deployment to take place, we need an effective ceasefire and the disengagement of all foreign forces. All the parties must adhere fully to the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and to the Harare disengagement plan. We also urge immediate implementation of relevant Council resolutions, particularly resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000).

My third and final point is that we agree, of course, with all those who have said that there can be no peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo until all foreign forces are withdrawn. However, a durable peace — again, as many have said this morning — cannot be achieved until the valid security concerns of all the parties have been addressed.

We are also aware, listening to the remarks made this morning, that there is another complication. The vast territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo offers the potential for plunder, exploitation and extractive economic agendas. In this regard, we hope that all the parties involved in the issue of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will realize that the fruits of long-term economic development are much richer than the fruits of such short-term economic agendas, and we hope that all the parties involved will realize that, if we can move towards an effective peace process, all the parties involved in the Democratic Republic of the Congo will benefit.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to convey our pleasure at seeing you, Sir, preside over this meeting. I also thank your delegation for having made the arrangements for us to meet today with the President of Rwanda.

My delegation welcomes President Kagame warmly and thanks him for coming here to have this dialogue with the Council on the situation in the Great Lakes region and its implications for international peace and security.

Last week in this Chamber, in connection with President Kabila's visit, we expressed our firm resolve to defend the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the countries of the Great Lakes region. We also stated our clear intention to require the signatories of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to fulfil their commitments to establish peace in the region and we expressed our desire to promote a swift deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in favourable working conditions.

Today, we would like to make precisely the same points to the President of Rwanda, because we feel that this is indeed a window of opportunity to promote

peace in Africa. We were pleased to hear him speak of renewed support for the Lusaka process and for the United Nations presence in Congolese territory. We believe that this is the moment for the entire world to witness action being taken towards peace by the political leaders of the Great Lakes region, such as a ceasefire in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a disengagement of forces monitored by the United Nations, an orderly withdrawal of foreign forces and a normalization of the security situation along the borders.

Two actions provided for in the Lusaka Agreement are of great importance to stability in the region. The first is the disarmament of the armed groups operating in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the second is the repatriation of their members to their respective countries of origin. In this connection, we would greatly appreciate any remarks the President of Rwanda may wish to make on the repatriation of refugees and other persons of Rwandese origin currently living in Congolese territory.

We recall with deep pain the events of 1994 in Rwanda, which gave rise to many of the problems currently engulfing the Great Lakes region. We believe that the proper administration of justice in Rwanda and gradual reconciliation among the Rwandese people are an inherent part of a lasting peace in the region. The course of justice must be firm towards the perpetrators of genocide so that the Rwandese communities can look to the future with confidence.

As members of the international community, and in particular as members of this Council, we are prepared to offer and guarantee our assistance.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): My delegation highly appreciates the fact that you, Sir, are presiding over this important meeting. My delegation joins the others in welcoming President Kagame to this meeting and wishes to thank him for his important statement. Norway has closely followed the developments in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994 and we remain committed to supporting democracy-building and humanitarian efforts in the country through the United Nations and other organizations. Norway has supported the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda since it was established and we firmly believe that those responsible for the genocide should be held accountable.

The current situation in the Great Lakes region is closely linked with what happened in 1994, and I appreciate the opportunity for the Security Council to meet with President Kagame to discuss the way forward in the context of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The Lusaka Agreement continues to be the path towards a peaceful solution to the complex conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. Recent statements from African leaders have created a new situation, which must be utilized to further facilitate peace. There is now, as has been stated, a window of opportunity. The meeting later this month between the Political Committee of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement and the Security Council is a timely and an important opportunity in this regard. We urge the parties to explore thoroughly, through regional consultations prior to that meeting, any political avenues that might be available for further consideration at the meeting. In this light we note with interest the contact in Washington last week between President Kagame and President Joseph Kabila.

Last Friday, President Kabila addressed the Security Council, and we noted his desire to pursue a policy of reconciliation. We believe that full commitment to peaceful negotiations remains indispensable in the search for a lasting solution to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region.

I would like to reiterate the support of the Government of Norway for the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement. The Agreement states that nothing in the Agreement shall in any way undermine the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. It further states that the parties to the Agreement must commit themselves to immediately addressing the security concerns of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries. This means that all foreign forces must withdraw from the Democratic Republic of the Congo according to schedules drawn up by the United Nations, the Organization of African Unity and the Joint Military Commission. It also means that there are legitimate security concerns that have to be addressed jointly by the parties and the international community.

At the same time, while expressing understanding for the precarious security situation that Rwanda is facing, my Government is of the opinion that this cannot justify deploying Rwandan troops — or

Ugandan troops, for that matter — several hundred kilometres inside the territory of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Full deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) as soon as the security situation allows will be an important step in safeguarding Rwanda's and other countries' security concerns. Any support provided to the "negative forces", which the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe represent, must cease immediately in order to facilitate the peace process.

Furthermore, the efforts to rebuild peaceful relations in the Great Lakes region must take due account of the ongoing illegal exploitation of natural resources and other forms of wealth in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We urge all parties to the conflict to cooperate constructively with the United Nations Expert Panel established for this purpose.

The high-level diplomatic activity during the last few months is an indication of the willingness of African leaders and leaders from other countries to support the peace efforts in the Great Lakes region. In conclusion, permit me to urge the parties to exercise the necessary flexibility in the search for a political solution to the conflict. The United Nations must stand ready to facilitate this important process.

Mr. Granovsky (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Your participation, Mr. President, in this meeting of the Security Council today shows how important the situation in the Great Lakes region is in the Council's agenda.

May I greet His Excellency President Paul Kagame of the Rwandese Republic and express gratitude to him for his readiness to meet with members of the Council in order to exchange opinions on the problem of settling the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Our fundamental position in favour of the earliest possible political settlement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the basis of the preservation of the territorial integrity of that country in accordance with the Lusaka and subsequent agreements, and also in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000), remains unchanged.

We in Russia are closely following the development of the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after the recent tragic event there. We note with satisfaction that the new leadership of the Democratic Republic of the Congo confirms its dedication to a settlement of the conflict on the basis of the Lusaka Agreement and expresses its readiness to enter into dialogue with its neighbours on the issue of ensuring security in the subregion and to achieve national reconciliation and democratization in its country by opening up the inter-Congolese dialogue. We hope that in the near future these statements will be given tangible confirmation, and we call on all States engaged in the conflict not to miss the window of opportunity offered for a renewal of the peace process.

It is essential to break the vicious circle of mutual distrust and take genuine steps towards a settlement of the conflict. In this context we welcome the readiness of the Rwandan leadership to start a withdrawal of forces from the Pweto region, one of the most likely to flare up. We also call upon the other parties to the conflict to fulfil their obligations under the disengagement plan and to refrain from activities that might lead to a further destabilization of the situation. In general we attach the greatest importance to the earliest possible withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo under the time frame of the Lusaka Agreement, on the understanding that, as required by Security Council resolutions 1304 (2000) and 1332 (2000), this process should start with a withdrawal of those forces that entered the Democratic Republic of the Congo without the invitation of the Government.

Of course, we fully recognize that the long-term settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region of Africa is impossible without a solution of the illegal armed groups. We call upon all parties to the conflict to cooperate in ensuring the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of members of the illegal armed groups in order to create conditions for security for all the countries of the subregion. At the same time, we would like to emphasize that from our viewpoint, solving this problem by force is impossible. For the process to be successful, it must be based upon a democratization of political life and a solution of inter-ethnic problems, not only in the Democratic Republic of the Congo but in all neighbouring countries.

We are particularly alarmed by reports of mass violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the eastern provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which are not under Government control. We call upon those who are

concerned not to allow such violations and to cooperate with international humanitarian personnel by providing free access to all those in need of assistance.

This month the Council has to review the fulfilment by the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) of its mandate in that country. This entails an analysis of the extent to which the parties to the conflict are cooperating with the Mission and are fulfilling their obligations concerning ceasefire and disengagement of armed forces. If the results of this review show that the parties are filled with a genuine political will to carry out these tasks, this will undoubtedly help the Security Council in considering the deployment of the second phase of MONUC peacekeeping operations.

Mr. Wang Donghua (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation is pleased to see you, Sir, presiding over today's meeting. We also appreciate the Secretary-General's presence and his important statement. The Chinese delegation welcomes President Kagame to the Council and his exchange of views with Council members on the situation in the Great Lakes region.

Several days ago, Council members had a candid exchange of views with President Joseph Kabila, President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on the conflict in that country. China believes that such an exchange of views is conducive to the efforts of the parties in the region to seek peace there. Turmoil and conflict in the Great Lakes region are attributable to profound historical ethnic factors and also involve poverty, intrinsic contradictions and external intervention. From the tragic genocide in Rwanda in 1994 to the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we have been able to see that these contradictions and factors have interacted and are interlinked.

Various parties have repeatedly emphasized that a coordinated and comprehensive strategy must be adopted to deal with the situation in the Great Lakes region. Only when peace and stability are restored to the entire Great Lakes region can peace and stability in the countries of the region be guaranteed. No country can possibly build its own peace and development on its neighbours' wars and conflicts. Therefore, the Chinese side hopes that every country in the region will seize the opportunity to use political judgement and decide to settle the conflict peacefully through dialogue and consultation.

The new Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has repeatedly emphasized its commitment to relaunching the Lusaka peace process, to conducting political dialogue and to cooperating fully with the United Nations. China hopes that the parties concerned will respond positively to that and prove to the international community with actual deeds their sincere desire to seek peace.

The Chinese delegation wishes to emphasize three points. First, the inter-Congolese dialogue is critical for the advancement of the Congolese peace process. However, that dialogue should be free of external intervention or interference, not to mention military intervention. Secondly, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo must be respected. This is a principle that every Member of the United Nations should observe. Thirdly, security in the border areas between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the countries concerned should be guaranteed.

We also believe that the achievement of peace and stability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbouring countries represents the biggest challenge before the United Nations. The positive roles of the United Nations and the Security Council are crucial for the early realization of peace in the Great Lakes region. China supports the Security Council's taking concrete measures, increasing inputs and deploying peacekeepers to the border areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and the other countries concerned as soon as possible, when conditions permit, in order to address the security concerns of the relevant countries and facilitate the settlement of the conflict.

Mr. Neewoor (Mauritius): First of all, I wish to thank you, Mr. Minister, for presiding over this important meeting. The delegation of Mauritius is very pleased to welcome Mr. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, to the Security Council Chamber this morning. We thank the President for his important briefing.

In the wake of the recent tragic event in Kinshasa, the Security Council received guarantees from Rwanda that it did not intend to take advantage of the situation. Similar guarantees were also received from Uganda. We are glad that these guarantees have been respected,

and on that account, the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo continues to remain largely peaceful.

There is no doubt that the Lusaka Agreement constitutes the only basis for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, indeed, in the whole Great Lakes region. Last Friday the new President of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in his statement to the Security Council, reconfirmed his country's commitment to move the Lusaka process forward and to actively pursue the inter- Congolese dialogue. We would like to see all the parties to the conflict reaffirm their commitments similarly. We believe there is today an excellent opportunity for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Great Lakes region.

Indeed, for the last few weeks we have been hearing statements of commitment from the parties to the conflict to move the Lusaka process forward. Now is the time for these statements to be translated into concrete action by all those concerned. In this regard, the highest priority undoubtedly is the implementation of the disengagement plan signed in Harare in December. In this regard, we have noted with satisfaction that Rwanda has offered to go beyond the provisions of the disengagement plan and withdraw its forces to a distance of up to 200 miles. We welcome this positive commitment by Rwanda. Our goal, of course, is to bring about the withdrawal of all foreign troops from the Democratic Republic of the Congo at the earliest.

We are confident that the meeting of heads of State of the region in the coming days will add new impetus to the momentum already created to advance the Lusaka process. We call for the earliest deployment of phase II of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1332 (2000).

The dire conditions prevailing in the Great Lakes region are largely a result of the illegal circulation of and trafficking in small arms and light weapons and the use of mineral and other resources for financing paramilitary and organized rebel groups. We are therefore looking forward to the report and the findings of the United Nations panel on illegal exploitation of natural resources and other sources of wealth of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is due next month.

We are extremely concerned by the humanitarian situation arising from the instability in the Great Lakes region. All the countries of this region face the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons. Although the humanitarian relief agencies are doing a commendable job in alleviating their suffering, we would like to see the international community make more efforts to provide further assistance to these people, who find themselves in dire economic conditions. But there is no doubt that only when peace and stability are firmly established in all the countries of the region will the end of human suffering be ensured.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to add that no progress can be achieved unless the leaders of the Great Lakes region show their determination, will and commitment to engage fully in bringing stability and peace to the region. We believe that the time to do so is now.

Mr. Kuchynski (Ukraine): It is a great pleasure to see you, Mr. Minister, presiding over our meeting. We would also like to join previous speakers in welcoming President Paul Kagame to this Chamber and thanking him for his very important, comprehensive and constructive briefing.

As is known, and as has been clearly confirmed by President Kagame, security in the Great Lakes region depends directly on the security situation in each individual country. The general analysis of the situation proves that the main causes of conflict in the region, as well as of overall instability, are ethnic divergence, weak political governance linked to the lack of national dialogue, the presence of uncontrolled armed groups, flows of refugees, fluid borders and poverty.

In this regard, we would like to put special emphasis on the problem of fluid borders between countries, which has become one of the main causes of insecurity in the whole region. This factor leads to the uncontrolled movement of armed groups and refugees and does not contribute to creating a favourable political environment for strengthening national dialogue. In this regard, we would like to underline the crucial role to be played by the international community in resolving the problem through the elaboration of a comprehensive regional strategy. The resolution of specific conflicts in the area, in particular in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in

Burundi, requires regional approaches involving a wide range of existing confidence-building mechanisms. In this context, we entirely support the idea of convening an international conference on the Great Lakes region, under the auspices of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity, which could be become an important step towards the elaboration of a constructive, comprehensive, regional approach to address the problems.

At the same time, we believe that the effectiveness of international support for the maintenance of peace and security depends on the implementation by the parties to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo of their commitments in the framework of the Lusaka Agreement and other peace arrangements, and their readiness for national reconciliation and dialogue.

The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo generates the main context of general insecurity in the Great Lakes region and has a very negative impact on the fragile peace in the Central African Republic and on the peace process in Burundi. It should be recognized that without the restoration of peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there can be no lasting solution to the crisis in that part of the world.

I would like to reiterate the position of my Government by underlying the need for the implementation of the Lusaka Agreement and all relevant resolutions by all the parties as the key to the settlement of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the restoration of sustainable peace in the whole area.

We welcome the outcome of the meeting between President Paul Kagame and President Joseph Kabila in Washington last week, at which the parties reaffirmed their commitment to a constructive dialogue aimed at resolving existing differences. We are convinced — and this has been stressed by members of the Council today — that there can be no military solution to the most complex conflicts in Africa. We urge the leadership of the countries in the area to take a pragmatic approach towards the peace process, to become good neighbours and to cooperate fully for the sake of progress and peace in Africa.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tunisia.

The Security Council's preoccupation with the Great Lakes region is clear; it is attested to by the many meetings scheduled this month to address the situation there. I should like to single out in particular the meeting with the Political Committee of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement to discuss the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that these meetings will have practical results that contribute to reactivating the peace process and fulfilling the aspirations of all the people to peace, security, stability and progress.

The Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement, which supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and provides for the establishment of conditions conducive to security and stability for neighbouring countries, remains the best framework for arriving at a negotiated settlement to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We expect the parties to the Agreement to prove their commitment to the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We believe that circumstances are favourable for giving a new impetus to the peace process. The international community is called upon to encourage all the parties concerned and to help them build the pillars of lasting peace in the region, including by providing assurances to the parties concerned about their security and stability, thereby improving the opportunities for conciliation, solidarity, cooperation and development in the continent.

We look forward to the earliest possible deployment of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This will translate into action the determination of the international community to shoulder its responsibilities with regard to the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region as a whole.

We sense that there is a desire to move towards peace. We expect the parties concerned to undertake the practical steps necessary for the realization of that objective. Tunisia supports and encourages each and every initiative undertaken by Rwanda or any other party aimed at dialogue, conciliation and cooperation in the framework of mutual respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of each State in the region.

We welcomed President Kagame's meeting last week with President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We hope that the dialogue will continue and advance in the interest of the peoples of Rwanda, of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and of the entire region, who yearn for a better tomorrow.

For years, Tunisia has been following developments in the Great Lakes region. Notably during its presidency of the Organization of African Unity in 1994 and 1995, Tunisia contributed to African efforts to ease tension in the Great Lakes region and to bring about rapprochement among the States of that region. President Ben Ali has taken numerous initiatives to that end. Tunisia has consistently supported all peace processes on the African continent, and hopes that they will help strengthen peace, security, stability, development and cooperation in the region.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I call on His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagame, President of the Rwandese Republic, to respond to the comments that have been made and the questions that have been raised.

President Kagame: I am grateful for this additional opportunity to talk about the very important issues that have brought us here today. I have listened with great interest to the various serious concerns so well articulated by members of the Council with respect to the situation in the Great Lakes region, and to proposals concerning how we should be dealing with that situation.

I would respond by saying that most of those concerns are genuine; some of them are correct, others are not fully correct, and still others are perhaps lacking in facts or information. I shall try to address as many as I can on that basis.

First of all, in my view, most of the concerns that have been raised will in fact be addressed and dealt with if we focus on implementing the peace process that was agreed on at Lusaka. Sometimes, taking up issues in a very fragmented way is not very helpful in addressing the whole situation in a comprehensive way. Lusaka talks about all the things we have been discussing: it talks about disengagement; it talks about withdrawal of forces.

With withdrawal and other things taking place, most likely there will be no forces on the ground to blame for one thing or another. I think that some of the problems exist because we have failed to do the most important thing: to try to focus all our energy on making sure that the peace process is implemented. Sometimes we have not been able to differentiate between those who openly and clearly are violating the ceasefire and the peace process and those who have tried to meet their obligations. Sometimes measures have been taken that in actual fact cause, in one way or another, a delay in the whole peace process by trying to revise what had been agreed to by everybody – the signatories of the peace process.

For example, we spend so much time talking about "invited" and "uninvited" forces, when in actual fact the peace process, signed by everybody, says that all forces must withdraw. Then somebody decides to begin an argument about "invited" and "uninvited" forces; this adds to the length of time that should be spent on discussing the most important issues and on perhaps reaching an agreement on them. I think the issue is clear under the Lusaka peace process. Everybody, including the President of the Congo and the Government of the Congo, is a signatory; they agreed to the total withdrawal of forces. Actually, that is the most crucial thing — if it had happened at the time it was supposed to have happened. The issues of who goes first, who goes last and who does what have been introduced by somebody; that causes delays of its own, and we accept that. That is one problem.

On the issue of withdrawal, Rwanda is ready to withdraw its forces as agreed under Lusaka, and in conjunction with other problems being resolved — because forces came into the Congo for a certain reason, and Lusaka also addresses that reason. This should be taking place if we are serious about the implementation of the peace process — and Rwanda in particular is serious about the implementation of that process. At one point we even offered suggestions for trying to speed up implementation. For example, somebody talked about the proposal put forward by Rwanda when the disengagement that had been agreed on was not taking place: Rwanda decided unilaterally to take measures that would support the peace process by withdrawing its forces 200 kilometres, pulling them back towards Rwanda's border. Failure of that was caused by the Government of the Congo. In fact, the

Congo itself did not even deny it; it was clear and open.

We are still ready to take some of these initiatives, which would help advance the peace process. But that is not an end in itself; our pulling back or doing other things does not constitute an end in itself. The end is for everybody eventually to do what they are supposed to do and what they are asked to do in the peace process.

I want quickly to address some of the other concerns that have been voiced, for example the human rights problems that have been talked about.

This is a problem. In actual fact, the background of the problem we have in the Congo is the violation of human rights. That is the background. That is what we are trying to address, but I would rather look at it more comprehensively by saying that the human rights violations in eastern Congo are as bad as those in the west, north and south of the Congo. I would not advise the Council to discriminate about violations of human rights. The violations of human rights have been taking place in different forms throughout the territory of the Congo — in Kinshasa, in Lubumbashi, in northern Katanga and in northern Kasai.

One of the reasons for the failure of our withdrawal, when we tried to do it, was actually the violations of human rights by the Government. This withdrawal failed because of a number of things. We wanted and requested United Nations observers to come and be placed in some areas. Clearly, their numbers were not sufficient, so perhaps they needed to be brought into some specific, important areas to observe our withdrawal and events following it. The United Nations was not able to deploy in time, so we asked whether we should actually continue and do it without the United Nations deployment. There was an agreement that we could withdraw. When we withdrew our forces, the forces of Kabila moved into areas where we had been and killed people in northern Katanga and northern Kasai because the population was being accused of having been collaborators with the rebels who are fighting the Government or with Rwanda. There was therefore a mass movement of people following our forces, running away from the areas from which we had withdrawn. This was something we had expected; we had wanted the United Nations observers to be there, to observe and to be able to apportion responsibility and place it where it belonged.

So violations are taking place throughout the Congo. When we see on television people being shot and thrown in the rivers in Kinshasa, this must be talked about. These are very serious violations of human rights. In the eastern Congo, where we are deployed, there have been violations of human rights by the many forces that are operating in that area, which we have actually been fighting: the Mai-Mai, the members of the former Rwandan Armed Forces, the Interahamwe and the other groups. We have sometimes asked the rebel forces to look into that and to bring to book their own forces who may have been involved in it. The Government of Rwanda does not hesitate to take action against any of its members who get involved in any violations of human rights. This can be attested to by the courts in Rwanda that handle these cases. Individuals who have committed human rights violations are apprehended, brought to Rwanda and tried by the courts. This is done in broad daylight. We do not condone violations of human rights.

We have not been able, however, to control every household, every road and every forest to ensure that nothing happens. Most of the things that happen are happening because of the forces that are not controlled. Unfortunately, this is a situation that we have had to live with for quite a long time and that is the background of why we are in the Congo in the first place. It has been to try to fight this kind of thing and to ensure that it does not happen.

On the question of humanitarian aid workers, I am surprised that it is not known that the forces from Rwanda are actually about the only friends they have in that situation. They are the ones who are on their side, protecting them. The other problem is that they are not even there; actually, they do not come. I wish these humanitarian workers were there to help the population. They are not there. They are scattered; they are very few. There should be more than there are today to help in that situation, and we shall continue to try and help as much as our limited capacity allows.

Of course, sometimes people hear of violations of human rights. They do not fully understand to whom they are attributed. The other day, not long ago, somebody was accusing our country of violating human rights in Bunia, killing the people there. It took me a long time to convince these people that there is not a single Rwandan deployed in Bunia. This is an area that is totally different from where we are deployed, but somebody there is writing accusations

that Rwanda is violating human rights in Bunia. Yes, there are violations of human rights taking place in Bunia, problems between the Lendu and the Hema that we have all read about in the papers. We are not there. Rwanda is not deployed in Bunia — not a single soldier.

I really wish to put some of these things in the right perspective because this Council, unfortunately, does not always have credible sources of information. The United Nations has a presence in the Congo — a Mission authorized by this Council. I think some of these things should be brought to light in a better way.

As to the exploitation of resources, which many people have talked about — it should not be there. I would also ask the Council, when it finds the time and if it finds it appropriate to do so, to help us to define what the term "illegal exploitation of the resources of the Congo" means. It seems that people have different understandings about this term. I am sure there may be people rightly accused of exploiting resources in the Congo, but from the stories I have heard it is not really black and white. I think there is a grey area that needs to be sorted out. For example, there has been talk about exploitation of diamonds and gold. We shall convey all the information we have to the commission that has been established. I am glad that the commission has been established to look into that, but it will serve this Council very well if the commission acts professionally, thoroughly and objectively, and not politically, in looking at the problem. It is my personal view that, sometimes, some of these problems have tended to be diversionary — they take us away from the real issues that we should be addressing and do not help us to prevent some of these things from happening. We know of some cases — and we shall be happy to inform the committee concerned — in which there have been people trading in diamonds and gold for the last 15 years in the eastern Congo — going through Burundi, going through Rwanda, going through everywhere — and they are still in that business. They are doing it with the Congolese. If the rebels who are in the Congo are also illegal Congolese and cannot therefore do anything in that territory with people who have been doing that business all the time, it is an issue and an area that the Council could help to clear up, so as to really know what we are talking about when everybody is on board.

We shall be glad to make our own contributions to clear the air about illegal exploitation of resources, which has tended to take us away from dealing with the main theme: the peace issue, with the security issues and with the withdrawal of forces, and getting out of this situation. We shall be able to engage the committee and provide whatever support and information they require from our country. They have already learned that. They have come, and we have talked to them. I do not know whether they found us lacking in any way — I have not been informed about that. We are ready to continue.

The other thing is that they could be very helpful if they, in our case, have things to really compare. If today they have figures about how many suspect diamonds or how much suspect gold is being exported by Rwanda, then we would very much appreciate that information, because this can easily be looked for and found. This would help us to know the actual extent to which the issue that is being highlighted has gone. Insofar as Rwanda is concerned, I think that there has been an exaggeration about this issue. I think that there is a grey area that is not well defined and that I would request the Council to help us define so that we all fully understand what we are talking about and so that we can see whether we are rightly being accused or whether more explanation is needed.

If I may talk about the former Rwandan Armed Forces (ex-FAR) and Interahamwe, somebody was interested in the numbers. The numbers are one important aspect to find out about and to know. But the other very important aspect that is important to know is not so much the numbers as it is the very fact that there are Governments and people that are turning these numbers into a threat by giving arms and training and by associating with it. I think that this is very crucial, and we should not lose track of that by just talking about numbers. This Council has been involved with so many resolutions about the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, the genocide suspects and how past resolutions to deal with that are to be put in practice.

I have always wondered why there have been shortcomings in even following up, as one way of actually dealing with this problem, to make sure that nobody actually associates with these groups. This Council has done that in the case of Angola, with UNITA. They have threatened sanctions. They have done everything for the countries, for individuals and for groups that we associate with UNITA, and they think that has helped in that situation. When it comes to the ex-FAR and Interahamwe, there is condemnation

and understanding that they create security problems, but it always falls short of having clarity on the question of how you deal with the people who associate with these groups and that make them a security threat to Rwanda.

So, I really hope that the Council will also help us to address that problem; otherwise, with numbers it is hard to be very specific. I am sure that the precise numbers are mainly with those who are using them or who have been helping them. I am sure that in giving them arms and giving them clothes and food, they have numbers. We do not have precise information, but we think that, given what we have been noticing on the ground and what we get from those we have been able to capture at the front line when they are fighting, the figure would be about 15,000 of them.

But again, this is not the only issue. The issue is taking this 15,000 and adding other forces that constitute a problem for our country. If it were just about numbers this would be easy. In 1997 we repatriated 2 million of our refugees; among them there were over 40,000 ex-FAR and militia. We reintegrated them into the rest of the society. We have reintegrated over 15,000 former soldiers in our own army. So this is not a problem. The problem is that these others stayed out, and they are being helped to become a threat to our country. That is where the issue lies. That issue must be addressed if we are to finally realize security on both sides. We need to look at security issues on all sides, and that is really something that would be easier to do.

We are ready. Once we have gone through with the implementation of the Lusaka peace process, the big countries in the region should get together and think of how we can create a framework on a permanent basis that will address security issues in the region. This has happened in other regions; I do not see why it cannot serve us as well. But this is something that will come once we have overcome this crucial stage of moving ahead to implement what we have already agreed to in the peace process. Otherwise, we will continue with our endeavours to try to achieve peace, whether it is through the Lusaka framework or through talking to different individuals that can make a valuable contribution to realizing final peace. We shall continue to engage the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, under Joseph Kabila. We shall always be open, and we shall be ready to work with other countries in the region towards this objective of realizing peace in our region.

Once again, I am very happy for this opportunity to clear up some of the issues that have been raised, but I remain available to go on with whatever I might not have covered fully.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank President Kagame for the clarifications he has provided. I would also like to thank all the delegations that participated in our debate for their kind words addressed to me and to my country.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.